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Review of Political Islam in the Age of Democratization

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Walter Savage Landor's *Gebir* (1798), a work that transforms a "lost Eastern tale into an anonymous English Romance" (p. 105), shaped Southey's thinking at this time considerably. Byron's experiences travelling Ottoman Albania encouraged his extensive use of Islamic imagery, informed his apposition of Christianity and Islam in *The Giaour* (1813), and contributed to the formation of his heroine Zuleika in *The Bride of Abydos* (1814). Einboden's reading of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) addresses one of the most compelling instances of Islamic influence on British romanticism. Einboden contends that the appearance of Safie in the middle of the novel establishes "a hidden 'Arabian' apprenticeship" for Frankenstein's monster. The maiden mentors the monster in the acquisition of language, literature, and culture. Here, as in every chapter, Einboden proceeds methodically by offering substantial excerpts followed by expansive commentary on the meaning of each passage. This approach makes Einboden's work especially useful for the classroom, where students and other newcomers will appreciate his relegation of theoretical concerns and peripheral debates to the endnotes.

Similarly, biographical and historical connections link each new chapter with the last—establishing a network of Romantic relationships built around Islamic history, sources, and traditions—and create a sense of continuity among what might otherwise appear to be little more than a random assemblage of convenient examples. On this basis, Einboden theorizes that Washington Irving's *Life of Mahomet and His Successors* (1849–50) originated in a visit to Mary Shelley's home at precisely the same time that she unsuccessfully proposed the same idea to the publisher John Murray. Likewise, Ralph Waldo Emerson's uniquely American conveyance of Islamic sources stems from a book purchase made at Chancery Lane, London, only a week before his rather disappointing meeting with Samuel Taylor Coleridge. While Einboden occasionally over-interprets some examples, as in Edgar Allan Poe's passing mention of the Qur'an's "inscribed perfection" to describe an especially flawless publication (187), he convincingly concludes his work with Emerson's extensive translations of Hafiz by way of Joseph Hammer's German edition.

Einboden's *Islam and Romanticism* demonstrates that Romantic dependence on Islam extends far beyond banal caricatures of the Orient. Whether these examples reveal Islam to be a singular source of Romantic literature and spirituality, however, remains to be seen. Robert Southey, for example, regarded Islam as one of a series of mythologies that he hoped to explore as part of a grand poetic masterpiece over the course of his lifetime. Comparable studies of "Hinduism and Romanticism" could reveal that Islam belongs to a wider appreciation of world religions in this period. Einboden's work provides an exemplary model for future scholarship.

KAMRAN BOKHARI AND FARID SENZAI, *Political Islam in the Age of Democratization* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). Pp. 280. $110.00 cloth, $36.00 paper. ISBNs: 9781137008480, 9781137008046

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The outbreak of Arab Spring movements in 2011 and the resultant overthrow of entrenched autocratic regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen inspired euphoric optimism among Middle East and North Africa (MENA) pundits. Images of heroic Arab youths leading protests in public squares in defiance of repressive security forces augured well for the belated spread of democracy to this part of the world. Sadly, however, in two years' time, this optimism evaporated and a demoralizing pessimism took hold as Arab Spring movements fragmented in Egypt, Libya, and

Yemen; succumbed to repression in Bahrain; endured violence from radical Salafism in Tunisia; and became trapped between barrel bombs and vicious beheadings in Syria.

Political Islam in the Age of Democratization reflects the authors' confidence in the opportunity to integrate political Islam in democratic orders. Indeed, post-Arab Spring electoral victories by al-Nahda in Tunisia, the Party of Justice and Development in Morocco, and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt seemed to settle once and for all the debate between integrationists who believe that Islam(ism) is compatible with democracy and the eradicationists who insist on excluding Islamists from institutional politics. Unfortunately, we are back to square one after the demise of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, the return of secularists in Tunisia, and the authoritarian tendencies of the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi) in Turkey. More importantly, perhaps, is that MENA democratization is in retreat, not just the Islamists. Therefore, this book is overtaken by events and, regrettably, cannot help us understand the present or future trajectory of political Islam in the context of repression (Bahrain), counterrevolution (Egypt), and bloody civil war (Syria, Yemen, and Libya). The "age of democratization," the premise of the book, is not there anymore. What we are left with are political Islamists in prisons facing the gallows, and in the battlefield fighting a plethora of adversaries that are too nebulous to name.

Bokhari and Senzai offer a useful introduction to the range of Islamist actors in the Muslim world, explaining how diversity is a much more salient theme in Islamism than unity. In this regard, this would be a useful book for an introductory course on political Islam. It covers participatory Islamists such as the Muslim Brothers; Islamic nationalists such as Hamas and the Taliban; Salafis in the Gulf; Shiʿi Islamism in Iran, Iraq, and Lebanon; transnational jihadists such as al-Qaʿida and the Islamic State; and even post-Islamists such as the Justice and Development Party in Turkey.

The authors seek to capture this diversity in Islamism through the prism of democratization. They begin by asserting that democratization "offers the greatest theoretical purchase in the current context to understanding Islamism" (p. 11). Such a bold claim deserves elaboration, but none is given. Chapter 3 is presumably the space in which this theoretical framing was to take place. Instead, the chapter reviews theories of democratization, rehashes the old debates about the (in)compatibility between Islam(ism) and democracy, and introduces a three-tiered typology of Islamist movements based on their approaches to democracy: participators, conditionalists, and rejectors. This is description, not theory. Moreover, this typology is equally applicable to nationalists, secularists, and any other movement confronted with a democratic order. One could participate, one could condition their participation, and one could choose extrainstitutional means by which to advance an ideological vision of society. It is not clear why this framing offers analytical leverage to understanding Islamism or democratization in the MENA region.

More importantly, perhaps, is the fact that Islamists in the post–Arab Spring environment have become quite fluid on the issue of democratization due to two factors: the states with which they are contending have closed off the option of democratic participation, and some of the liberals that previously insisted on democracy have chosen to side with autocrats in opposition to their formidable Islamist rivals. In Syria, we have Islamists who are jihadists wishing to establish a democracy in a post-Asad regime (the Ahrar al-Sham Movement, for instance). In the 1990s, the Islamic Salvation Army (which was the armed wing of the Islamic Salvation Front) was a jihadist movement bent on toppling the military regime in order to reestablish the electoral process. Thus, jihadism is not necessarily opposed to democratization. Another puzzling anomaly is the so-called "conditionalist" Salafi al-Nur Party in Egypt, which has taken advantage of the demise of its Muslim Brotherhood competitor by *unconditionally* aligning itself with the military regime. In contrast, given that some liberal secularists have chosen to side with autocrats in places such as Libya, Syria, Egypt, and the Palestinian Territories due to their fear of Islamism, it is difficult to chide Islamists for failing to embrace democracy by calling them "rejectors." Democracy has relatively few diehard partisans in the MENA today.

A better framework for understanding Islamism from postcolonialism to the post–Arab Spring period is the enduring *crisis of legitimacy* that bedevils MENA states. Islamism in all its forms has been a response to this crisis of legitimacy, which encompasses crises of governance, identity, and institutions, to name a few. These crises help explain the emergence and relative strength of Islamism and democratization, as well as the diverse manifestations of Islamist actors and the degree of democratic institutionalization. What Islamists think about democracy (be they participators, conditionalists, or rejectors) has not shaped events in Egypt, Libya, or Syria in the post–Arab Spring MENA. The drivers of fragmentation, democratic retreat, and genocidal violence are far too many to name, but atop the list are repressive elites in crisis, struggles for power within revolutionary coalitions, and identity contests between secularists, nationalists, and Islamists. And while I agree with the authors' conclusion that "Islamists of varying shades become major players as authoritarian states break down and autocratic leaders lose their grip on power" (p. 185), how Islamists manifest organizationally and their political preferences and conduct will not be shaped by their attitudes toward democracy as much as by the dynamics of coalitional politics and the balance of power between Islamist actors and their rivals.

NUKHET VARLIK, *Plague and Empire in the Early Modern Mediterranean World: The Ottoman Experience, 1347–1600* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015). Pp. 360. $99.99 cloth. ISBN: 9781107013384

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One would need look no further than the topic of disease in the early modern period to see how scholarship on the history of the Ottoman Empire continues to lag behind that of other parts of the world. While scholars of western European, Atlantic, and US history have pinned, in part, such weighty historical developments as the demise of feudalism in Europe and the emergence of the trans-Atlantic slave trade on epidemic diseases, Ottoman historians, until quite recently, were still working out the basic timeline of the appearance and spread of epidemic diseases in the early modern Ottoman Empire. Historiographically speaking, this geographic unevenness in disease histories has forced Ottoman imperial historians to fight a rearguard action against the twinned Orientalist tropes of Islamic fatalism and the Ottoman Empire as a perennial source of epidemic diseases.

Thanks to Nükhet Varlık we can now begin the process of putting this unhappy state of affairs behind us and look forward to a productive period of scholarship on epidemic diseases and their impact on the trajectory of the Ottoman Empire in the early modern period. In her magisterial *Plague and Empire in the Early Modern Mediterranean World: The Ottoman Experience, 1347–1600*, Varlık (bridging the chronological gap between the scholarship of Michael Dols and Lawrence Conrad on the medieval Islamic Middle East and Daniel Panzac and Süheyl Ünver on the 18th and 19th centuries) plugs the enormous hole in our knowledge of plague in the early modern Ottoman Empire. In and of itself this foundational spadework would constitute an immense service to the field. As an indication, however, of the tenacity and determination that is consistently on display throughout this book, Varlık labors on to erect the scaffolding for future scholarship on plague and disease in the early modern Ottoman Empire. Moreover, and perhaps most importantly, Varlık puts to rest, once and for all, the corrupted yet tenacious paradigm of the "fatalistic Turk" and the long-held belief of a one-way (i.e., east to west) transmission of plague in the early modern period. As a result of Varlık's hard work, we now have a firm understanding